

Wednesday, August 12, 1992.

Dear family,

It's been a busy time between my letters. Having so many of you home with us has been wonderful! We are so proud of you and your children. We are not through yet; Mike and the boys and Mark, Terri and Rosie are due our way soon too. I best take advantage of the free time while I can. Having had this rest from writing, I found that I missed the sharing I had done with you. Since I gather there is still interest among you for us continuing our stories, likely we will. Dad remains pretty busy. He is trying to make up for lost time in piano practice, (at it right now as I type) he did some tree trimming yesterday, and still manages time for driving Ed and Wanda when they want to go shopping. He'll be back to writing soon.

My first year at Cath. U. was about over when I last wrote. I came back to Bay City for the summer and worked at Mercy Hospital. I worked in surgery, the 3 to 11 shift and acted as supervisor. Most of the scheduled surgery takes place in the morning hours but we had plenty to do anyway. We did a lot of preparing and autoclaving bundles for the next day's schedule plus the emergency that was not planned.

It was while I was working in surgery that summer that I saw my first and only extra-uterine pregnancy and delivery. I can't imagine why the doctor did not recognize this as a pregnancy outside the uterus but he let that poor woman go through pain. She was not dilating and finally x-rays were taken which showed the baby in the abdomen instead of the uterus. He did a C section at once but did not save the mother. The baby was a most gorgeous boy! His head was round and perfect (not having gone through the birth canal) and the rest of him was wonderfully shaped with all the parts. The husband was distraught, of course, and I did not find out how the doctor dealt with the situation. To be in surgery at a time like this is awesome! That was the only death I had seen in surgery and it was a heartbreaking one at that. I was very glad that the hospital supervisor came in to handle that one as I fear I would have lost my cool. That was the only time I felt I needed the extra help and advice. I have seen patients die but never like that! This is a million in one kind of a case and we were blessed to have the baby live. Nursing has provided me with a wealth of experiences and I would not have changed my career for any field. It surely came in handy in raising you children. There is no better preparation for motherhood.

It was during that summer that I realized that your Dad was an important part of my life. I missed our walks, talks, and just being together. We wrote frequently so we did keep in touch. We started to date that year in January and it took him until I was going home for the summer to give me a "goodbye" peck on the lips and make a quick exit. He had plenty of warning that I was not the kind of a girl who wanted a guy pawing her and he respected my wishes. We had an understanding (at least I understood) that this was friendship and nothing else. My Hawaii plans were still very much alive in my mind. I could admit to myself that he was a lot of fun to be with as long as that was the understanding, we could maintain the friendship.

All was not smooth sailing in our relationship, however. I remember coming off duty one night dog tired. It was such a beautiful night walking home that I felt a little revived and decided to write your Dad a letter. In those days we had 2 deliveries a day and often I would meet the mailman on route when I walked to work. If he had a letter for me, he would hand it over and I would read as I walked. I had a letter that day and decided to write back. I remember telling him how gorgeous and fragrant the night was and how the smells of the gardens seemed to follow me all the way home. The work of the day quickly tired me. I just put the letter in the envelope without proof reading it. BIG MISTAKE! A few days later I got the letter back with corrections made all through the letter! I was hurt---deeply hurt! I asked myself what kind of man is this that has no regard for the feelings of others? From the kind of parenting I had we had to put up with a lot that we did not condone or even like but considered the feelings of others. Accepting people as they were was part of my life and I expected the same in return. Did I really want that kind of person as a friend? I waited until the hurt was less before I wrote back and then it was a very careful cryptic note with politeness instead of warmth. After a time without mail from me, your Dad had to believe he made a mistake and "sort of" apologized. It was then that I got a better appreciation of what kind of person he was---that anything less than perfect is taboo. Hence the organized, less tolerant man was the one I was seeing---and writing to. He is that same man today; one I love but sometimes do not like because he can be cutting and less sensitive in his need to be right. I am sharing this very sensitive part of my life with you because I would like you all to be aware of how frail the human feelings are and how important our individuality is to each one of us. I am far from perfect and I don't expect others to be. I would desire for each of us to be

more tolerant. For myself I know I do not desire to make so many mistakes yet I do and I feel deficient. I will never measure up to Dad's, or my childrens' IQs and I have to live with that knowledge. Truth be known, I really would rather be who I am with my limited knowledge and tendency toward making mistakes than to be constantly on guard to present the best image and not be at home with who I am. I give myself a pat on the back for being the mother of 8 wonderful children. I have had a lot of influence upon your lives. Some things you change and others you will carry to your generation and beyond. That is profound! You are MY children; you came through my body and there is no way to change that. Know that I am very proud of being your mother and having brought you into this world.

When I went back to Washington, Gee was in her second year in training. She had the Cadet Corps to finance her expenses. With the monthly stipend she was better off than I had been. The second year in college was tough. Jo, Marie and I still lived with Mrs. Mike and had a wonderful time living together. My dating was confined to Saturday nights and sometimes Marie and I would take a movie in on Sunday afternoon if our study schedule permitted. We would have our leisure Sunday breakfast after Mass, study, have dinner and then maybe relax. It was at Mrs. Mike's that I came up with the "goober" rolls idea which we ate many Sunday mornings. 44 years later, they are still a family favorite. Marie tells me she learned a lot about cooking from me. How nice of her.

In the second semester of that year, I had news of Mom's failing health. Besides high blood pressure and cholesterol, Mom had a colloid goiter for years. For those who don't know, a colloid goiter is an enlargement of the thyroid gland in the neck. Under stress, there is pressure on the wind pipe and breathing becomes difficult. Mom was an excitable person anyway and with her other complications, she had a bad time. She also had Parkinson's disease which further complicated her life. She was taking medication for the tremors but that did not help much. With Gee in nursing school and Pen not yet out of high school, I was called for advice. Dad was not well either. He suffered with ulcers for many years and in many ways was sicker than Mom. My siblings were occupied with raising young children so that I felt it my duty to rally to the cause. I did not expect to come back to school so I packed all and flew home.

What a mess I came into! The house was filthy and my parents unwell. Dad was on a special diet for the ulcers which necessitated my getting up twice during the night to feed him. Mom was on complete bed rest so there was a lot of care involved with her too. It took about 3 months to get things rather stable when Mom passed out on me choking for lack of breath. We knew she would have to have surgery and have the goiter removed but we hoped to have Mom stable enough to enter the operation with less risk. We almost lost Mom then. We took her by ambulance to the hospital and surgery was done upon her thyroid. She had a thyroid crisis after it and I stayed with her throughout the night. Thanks be to God, she came through it the next morning and my patient got better. 10 more days and I had her home again. Dad was still ailing, of course. My time was taken up at home and I didn't even nurse at Mercy then. With proper diet and medication, Dad got better and Mom improved too. After 6 weeks or so both patients were up and about and life seemed stable enough for me return to Washington. Gee was back in Bay City having completed her time in Grand Rapids so though she could not live at home, she was there and Pen was getting more responsible as an 11th grader. I took the plunge and went back to school that fall.

My last year of the schooling at Washington came with some changes. Mrs. Mike gave up her house and moved to Nebraska to be with her oldest son. Marie and I had to find other housing. Jo decided studying did not please her and went back to nursing full time and lived at the nurses quarters. Before we graduated, she went back to California to be with her ailing parents. Jo and I kept touch for many years every Xmas. She married 3 times. The first ended in divorce, the 2nd husband died, and as far as I know she is still married to the third. She has not written the last few years. This seems like an apropos place to stop in this letter. My adventures will continue another time.

Love you and yours very much,

*Mom*

*You're all well we hope. Terri, you'd love our nice cool summer! Tomatoes are slow in ripening, but I do enjoy the outdoors this way. We look forward to seeing you & Posie.*